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APHORISMS OF GERAINT.



THE SEVEN PRIMARY MATERIALS OF THE WORLD*.

1. Earth; and whence every body and density and every substance and strength.
2. Water; and whence every liquid and moisture.
3. Air; and whence every breath and motion.
4. Sun; and whence all heat and light.
5. Empyreum; and whence every sensation, appetite, and affection.
6. Pure Spirit; and whence every perception.
7. God; and whence all life and power, and support unto world of worlds.

And from these seven primary essences are all being and life: and on the order of God may the whole rest. Amen saith the Blue Bard of the Chair †.

ORIGINAL LETTERS.



LETTER IX.

Bishop Percy to the Rev. Evan Evans; (no date).

DEAR SIR,—I received the favour of your obliging letter and the valuable present of the two British Odes translated into English. They have afforded me great pleasure, and they display a rich vein of poetry. I think a select collection of such pieces, thrown into a shilling pamphlet, would not fail to prove as acceptable to the public as the Erse Fragments, and would be far more satisfactory, because you could remove all suspicions of their genuineness, which, I am afraid, Mr. Macpherson is not able to do. I observe with you a remarkable similarity between our Runic and your British pieces. As our Runic Poetry will be fit for

* Arch. of Wales, vol. iii. p. 109.

† This was the common designation of the celebrated Aserius Menevensis, whose proper *cognomen* was Geraint, or Geraint Vardd Glas, Geraint the Blue Bard. He was a Monk of the Benedictine Order at St. David's, and was afterwards, on account of his superior talents, made Bishop of Sherbourne by Alfred, by whom he continued to be held in great repute. Caradog records his death in the following words:—“Aser the Wise, Arch-bishop of the Britons, died A. D. 906.”

publication towards Michaelmas, I wish you could get ready such another Collection of British Poetry to follow it in due time, while the curiosity of the public is fixed on these subjects. And, when all these pamphlets have had their day, then throw them into a volume under some such title as this, "Specimens of the Ancient Poetry of different Nations." I have for some time had a project of this kind, and, with a view to it, I am exciting several of my friends to contribute their share. Such a work might fill up two neat pocket volumes. Besides the Erse Poetry, the Runic Poetry, and some Chinese Poetry, that was published last winter, at the end of a book called "Han Kirn Choaan," or the Pleasing History, 4 vols.,—besides these, I have procured a MS. translation of the "Tagrai Carmen," from the Arabic; and have set a friend to translate Solomon's Song afresh from the Hebrew, with a view to the Poetry. This also is printing off, and will soon be published in a shilling pamphlet. Then I have myself gleaned up specimens of East Indian Poetry, Peruvian Poetry, Lapland Poetry, Greenland Poetry; and inclosed I send you one specimen of Saxon Poetry. The subject is a victory gained by the Anglo-Saxon, Athelstan, over the Dane Anlafe and his confederate Constantinus King of Scotland. If you compare it with the Runic Ode of Regner Lodbrog, you will see a remarkable affinity between them, some of the phrases and imagery being common to both, as the play of arms, &c. &c. The Latin version falls from the pen of my very learned friend Mr. Lye, who has made many important emendations in the original. The English was a slight attempt of my own, to see if one could not throw a little spirit into a literal interlineary version, but I have no reason to boast of my success. I believe, the best way would be to publish the English by itself, like the Runic Odes, and throw the two columns of Latin and Saxon to the end. Give me your opinion of my proposal, with regard to the various specimens mentioned above, and the share I would recommend to yourself in particular. Be pleased also to return my Saxon Ode, when perused, for I have kept no copy.

I suppose you have no British Poetry extant, that was written before the conversion to Christianity, as we have of the Runic, and as they affect to have of the Erse; if not, then the most ancient you have is to be chosen. Could not you give some of the Poetry of Taliesin and Merddin? I must observe one thing, that your Odes will require a few explanatory Notes, chiefly with regard to the proper names; and, if you would not think it too great

an innovation, I could wish you would accommodate some of your ancient British names somewhat more to our English pronunciation. This is what the Erse translator has done, and, I think, with great judgment. The word might be a little smoothed and liquidated in the text, and the original spelling retained in the margin. Thus Macpherson has converted Lambhdearg into Lamderg, Geolchopack (a woman's name) into the soft word Gealcossa, &c. This is a liberty assumed in all languages; and indeed, without it, it would not be possible for the inhabitants of one nation to pronounce the proper names of another *.

You tell me you have read Bartholinus's book of Danish Antiquities; it is a most excellent performance. There is a celebrated Frenchman, the Chevalier Mallet, historiographer to the present King of Denmark, who has lately published a work in French on the same subject, at the end of which he has given a French translation of the famous Edda or Alcoran† (if you suffer me to use the word) of the ancient Teutonic nations. If I have health and leisure, I intend to translate this book into English, though it is a formidable undertaking, being a quarto of no small size. I have got the book, which is a capital performance.

I should have one advantage over most others for such an attempt, which is, that my learned neighbour, Mr. Lye, has got the Icelandic original of the Edda, and would compare my version with it. I have one thing still to mention, and then I have done. I have lately been employed in a small literary controversy with a learned friend, about the original and antiquity of the popular notion concerning Fairies and Goblins. My friend is for fetching that whimsical opinion from the East, so late as the time of the Crusades, and derives the words Elf and Goblin from the Guelfe and Gibbeline factions in Italy. But I think it would be impossible for notions so arbitrary to have obtained so universally, so uniformly, and so early (see Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale), if they had not got possession of the minds of men many ages before. Nay, I make no doubt but Fairies are derived from the *Daergar* or Dwarfs, whose existence was so generally believed among all the northern nations. Can you, from any of your ancient British writers, enable me to ascertain any of these disputed

* However proper it may be to take this liberty with some languages, it is neither necessary nor justifiable with respect to old Welsh names, which are very far from being harsh or unmusical.—ED.

† The learned writer should have said *Koran*. *Al* is the article, and therefore “the Alcoran” is a tautology.—ED.

points, or any resemblance to the name of Fairy, Elf, Goblin, in your language? I should think, that these popular superstitions are aboriginal in the island, and are remains of the ancient Pagan creed *. Favour me with your opinion on this subject when you write next, which, as your letters are so extremely curious and fraught with entertainment, I beg may be soon. I remain, Sir, your very faithful servant,

THOMAS PERCY.

WELSH MUSIC.—No. VI.

To the EDITOR of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

SIR,—“Breuddwyd y Frenhines,” or *The Queen’s Dream*, is not so well known as it ought to be; the melody is very smooth and elegant, with a mixture of ancient and modern composition. The modulation at the 17th, and three following bars, (or measures), is peculiar to the Welsh airs: the bass of these four bars would answer for the commencement of *Ar hyd y nos*. The words run thus:—

“ I fondly in my bosom cherish’d
Thy vows, and thought they were sincere ;
But ah! my dearest hopes have perish’d,
For thou art false, as thou art fair !”

“Suo Gân,” or *The Lullaby Song*.—There are but four bars in this air;—but those are very plaintive and characteristic. This appears to be the universal *Hushaby* of the Welsh nurses, when they lull their infants to sleep; and certainly nothing can be more appropriate. It is very probable, that Storace took his *Lullaby*, in the “Pirates,” from this tune.

“Pen Rhaw,” or (literally translated) *The Spade Head*, is a beautiful air—and one of the tunes most adapted to the *Pennillion*. The harper of the Gwyneddigion Society performs variations on “Pen Rhaw” in a very masterly manner, some of which are peculiar to the Welsh harp, and consequently lose their effect when attempted on the piano-forte or pedal harp.—

* The allusions to these imaginary beings are numerous both in the works of the early bards and in other old writings, especially in the *Mabinogion*: but the names have no resemblance to fairies, or goblins. It is designed to enter hereafter into the investigation of this curious subject; in the mean time a few particulars will be found in a subsequent page of the present number.—ED.